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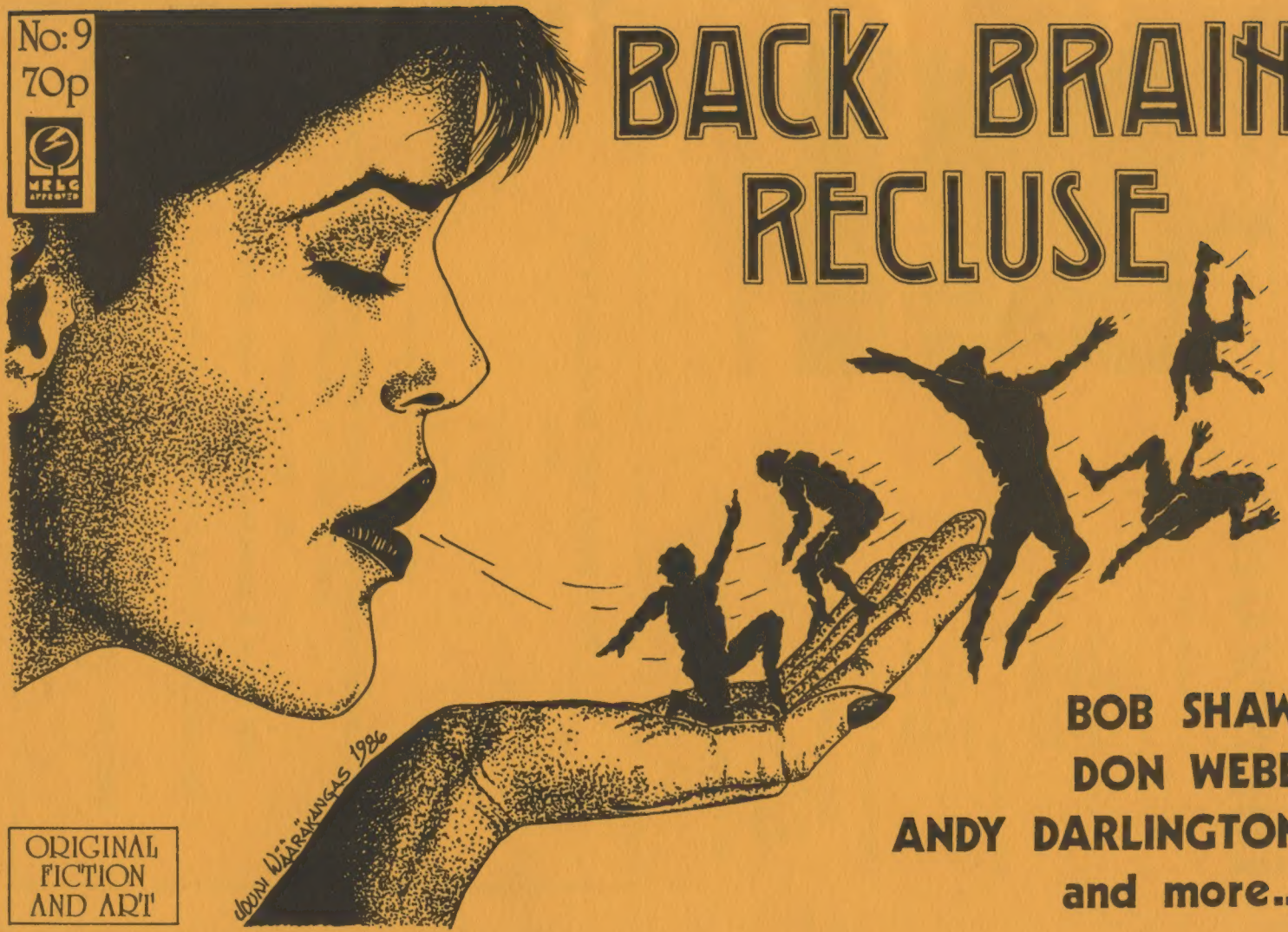

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No 21 Autumn 1987

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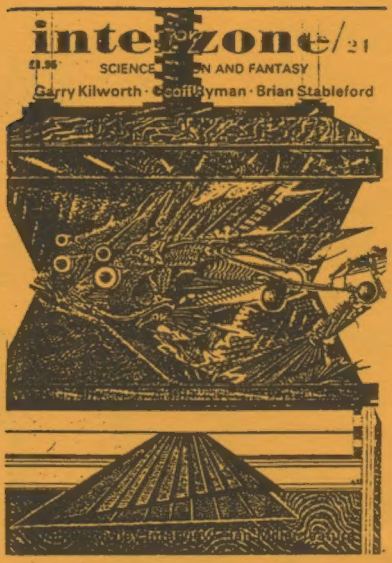

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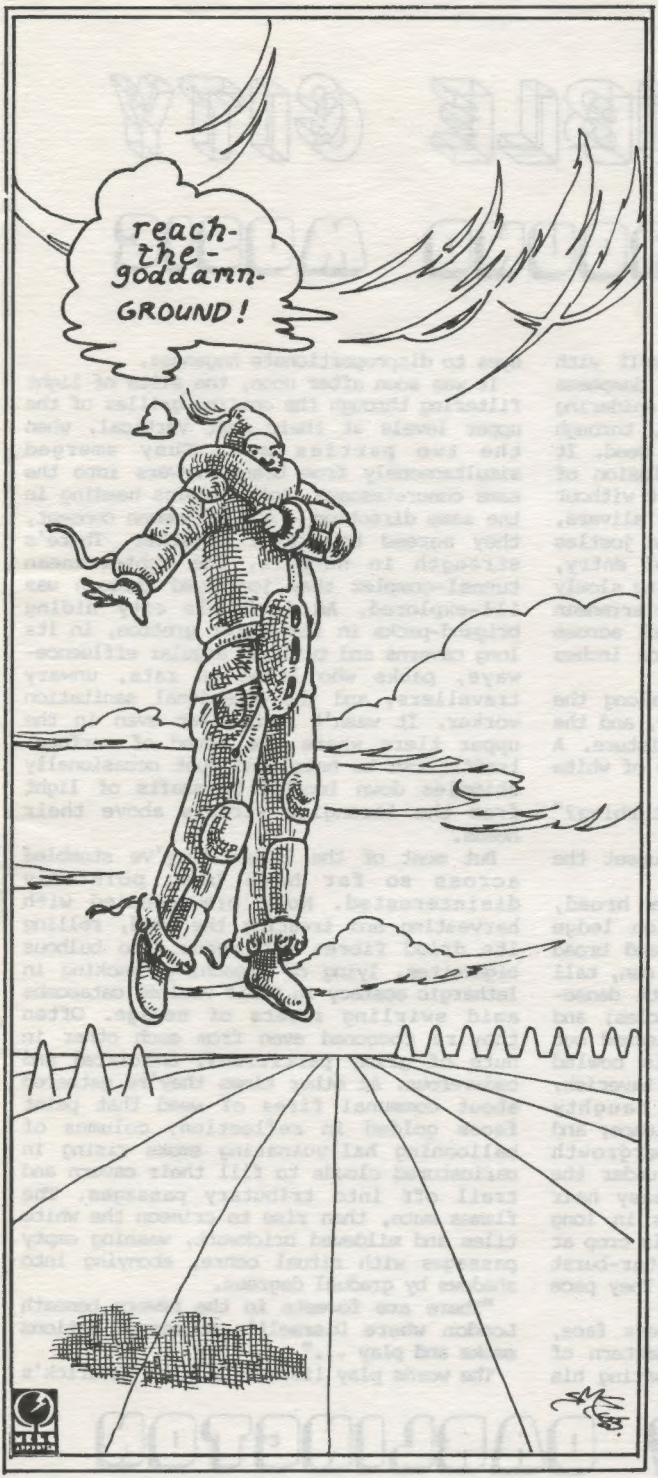

CONTENTS

4 INVISIBLE CITY/ UNDERGROUND MUSIC
Andrew Darlington

12 SEXSCORE GAMES
Dave Cunliffe

14 BOB SHAW Interview

20 THE ART OF ATTENTION
Don Webb

22 ATTRACTION Ray Jon

24 THE GRIN
Wayne Allen Sallee

26 STORMBREAK
Nigel King

27 THE YELLOW Mark Iles

38 MAGAZINES In Review

COVER - 'JA NYT TÄHTIÄ NAIMAAN' - FROM **... UNTA JOKAINEN KATSOO ...** BY JOUNI WAARAKANGAS

ILLUSTRATED BY SMS (pp.5-10, 34-5), MATT BROOKER (pp.21, 28-9), t. WINTER-DAMON (p.13) AND KAISER BILL.

INVISIBLE CITY

UNDERGROUND MUSIC

A hallucinating rat launches itself with feral grace from the ledge, fur dampness glistening in the fragmented and spidering light as it falls, almost slowly, through the snaky white tendrils of tall weed. It hits the water in a brittle explosion of slow-motion droplets rising, almost without sound, in elongated disintegrating slivers. For a long moment the murky water jostles and collides about its point of entry, concentric expanding ripples drifting slowly along the gleaming white-tiled subterranean tunnel. Reflections flash and spark across the half-lit mildewed ceiling bare inches above the heads of the watchers.

A physical silence congeals along the sewer over the muted wash of water, and the steady dripping of condensing moisture. A foul breeze disturbs random fronds of white perpetually sunless plants.

"You find this passage disturbing?" Vinnicombe probes.

Laverick nods, careful not to upset the silence.

The four of them rest on a broad, majestically overgrown inspection ledge running half-way between ceiling and broad water channel. There are two older men, tall angular and wasted Vinnicombe with dense-lensed pebble wire-rimmed spectacles; and Traherne crouching by his side fleshed out by the voluminous layers of his cowled habit. And there are two youths, Laverick, standing to emphasize his haughty aggression, yet in awe of the silence; and Fren lying back in the undergrowth passively, shapeless figure lost under the wrinkles of her robe, long greasy hair straggling around her shoulders in long loose promontories. Two pack animals crop at the tall, extremely branched star-burst fronds of decapitated white weed. They pace free, but directionless.

Vinnicombe laughs. His fleshless face, inside its hood, a reflecting pattern of light and shade, thick lenses bloating his eyes to disproportionate hugeness.

It was soon after noon, the slits of light filtering through the ceiling-grilles of the upper levels at their most vertical, when the two parties met. They emerged simultaneously from branch sewers into the same concretescape, both couples heading in the same direction - so, by common consent, they agreed to travel together. There's strength in numbers. The subterranean tunnel-complex they journeyed through was ill-explored. An invisible city hiding brigand-packs in its deeper grottos, in its long caverns and twisting angular effluence-ways, packs who lived on rats, unwary travellers, and the occasional sanitation worker. It wasn't much safer even in the upper tiers where the sound of surface-traffic can be heard and dust occasionally shimmies down impaled by shafts of light from the thronging streets above their heads.

But most of the tribes they've stumbled across so far have been pointedly disinterested. More pre-occupied with harvesting and treating the weed, rolling its dried fibres and seeds into bulbous cigarettes, lying or crouching, smoking in lethargic ecstacy in their vaulted catacombs amid swirling rivers of sewage. Often they're cocooned even from each other in huts of grimy partitions, emaciated and cadaverous. At other times they're gathered about communal fires of weed that paint faces golded in reflection, columns of ballooning hallucinating smoke rising in caricatured clouds to fill their cavern and trail off into tributary passages. The flames mute, then rise to crimson the white tiles and mildewed brickwork, washing empty passages with ritual ochre, ebonying into shadows by gradual degrees.

"There are forests in the sewers beneath London where Disraeli's submerged nations smoke and play ..."

The words play listlessly round Laverick's

ANDREW DARLINGTON

attention. They're without meaning.

AVERAGE COMPOSITION OF SEWAGE (Parts per 100,000)	
Albuminoid nitrogen	9.1
Ammoniacal nitrogen	35.3
Total organic nitrogen	22.5
Oxidised nitrogen	58.5
Oxygen absorbed at 27C in four hours	112.7
Chlorine	91.6
Solids in suspension	294.0

The strength (McGowan) was approx. 100p.p 100,000

"SEWERAGE AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL"
L.B. Escritt (C.R. Books Ltd.)

"It's generally accepted," says Traherne, "that Jokerman was one of twins in a small sewer community to south. An advanced group, they utilised water-flow to generate electricity for light, forced various grain and plants to grow in special sludge-beds, stuff like that. His father was also his grandfather - in a manner of speaking - according to a cult existing for a while in that part of the invisible city. His mother was also his sister." Traherne pauses, eyes focusing beyond the archway they shelter in.

Laverick leans forward to hear more. Fren is smoking. She looks bored.

"His twin brother was an idiot savant, incapable of logic, unable to reason or even converse. Yet there was an odd skill in abstract mathematics."

"The word idiot's open to interpretation," interjects Vinnicombe. "A person whose individuality can't be bent sufficiently to make it useful. A non-productive person - no other judgement can be made."

"You're right. The word implies value judgement, a set of absolutes. Which, as is common knowledge, don't exist."

For a moment there's sound, and nothing but sound. It flutes erratically round the tunnel, echoes and reverberates from slime-covered mossy tiles, crosses the overgrown plain of tall rampant weed, the loses itself in the forks and twists of the distance.

Laverick passes tongue over dry lips, it feels good. He feels positive; wearing his prized thigh-high waders, carefully buffed, and a jerkin of linked ring-pull tabs, there's not a lot can go wrong this day

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Oakleigh, 16 Somersall Lane,
Chesterfield, Derbyshire.

Edited by CHRIS REED

ISSN 0269-9990

Single copies:	Subscriptions:
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US: $3:00	$10:00
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surely? The pack mules, already laden, respond to the whistle, move across the bursting concrete of the walkway. They move slowly, time's not important, time harasses only the lives of the surface-city. The mules are unused to travelling long distances over the crust of decaying vegetation, lichen and slime beneath them, and they show disapproval by reacting stubbornly to command. But time's on their side.

Light spills haphazardly between grille-slits set high into the ceiling. Pipes protrude from curved walls discharging effluence and toxic fluids in rituals of stark functionalism. The tunnels fork, merge and twist insanely, opening into cathedral-like halls where a number of tributaries join, or narrowing down so the travellers have to stoop to pass through them. Occasionally they use torches as the light fades, reflected flames quivering in shimmering cascades of water. They skirt clear of filtration tanks, and douse their lights near methane pockets where explosions might occur. But everywhere the sewers are haunted by bizarre and dense forests, beautifully iridescent and taller than a man, and by the sound of water rippling, roaring, or just dripping litanies. Often there are swarms of long-legged horse-flies and other insects darting like kamikaze across the cones of light, dancing about their heads. Wraiths of transient mist dissipate at their approach.

They speak little as they walk.

Towards midday they reach the bridge.

For a long while, as they approach, they become gradually aware of the water's quickening pace. Then there's an echo, at first like distant traffic moving muted in the streets above, but eventually it's a thunder swirling and vortexing ahead of them. They emerge into a chamber at a point half-way up its wall, a steady drizzle of condensation giving the cavern a spectral appearance. The sewer they follow empties in a roaring column far down into a broad sluggish river, while the inspection walkway continues in a scrawl of delicate spans spiralling down until, at its lowest point it merges into the tiled area of the arena below, where fresh tunnels honeycomb the walls. The bridging walkway's central spans are missing, replaced by a crude rope affair, and the mules shy back, unwilling to go on.

Laverick crosses to the rusting iron railings fencing the bridge parapet, the two older men and the girl watch without real

interest. Far beneath him the water is swollen, sluggish with silt; it moves lazily round the remaining piles sunk into its bed.

"It follows a finely regulated pace. It don't matter the cost of its obstruction," says a voice from behind him.

Laverick turns to a newcomer erupting with comic menace from a place of concealment in the thicket of white weed. He's moving its tendrils aside with the snub nose of a levelled sub-machinegun. He's squat, gives an overall imprecise impression of some nameless deformity, his clothes ill-fitting and dirty.

"We wanna cross the bridge, but the beasts won't go." Traherne shrugs ineffectually beneath his habit.

"It's MY bridge," the newcomer's face rodently animated. "I can get 'em across." He spits carefully into the fibrous dust of rotting vegetation shrouding the concrete between his feet.

Laverick kicks a pebble of masonry into the foul flood far beneath him. There's a perceptible silence as it spirals down to drown, disturbing the flotation trash of condoms and Kotex with a sudden system of receding rings telescoping away on the tide.

"How do we get across the bridge?" Vinnicombe demands abruptly, squinting suspiciously through the distorting lenses of his spectacles.

"I can tell you. I'll tell you in due course. It's unseemly to hurry business. Time's dead, don't you realise? Since the hallucinating plants congested the sewers there's no need for urgency. Hashish to ashes. Must to dust." He eases his squat body down into a crouch, evidently self-satisfied with the pronouncement, and begins picking his nose.

"What's your price?"

"Half what you carry."

"That's robbery!"

"Could be. Fact is you've the choice of crossing - or not crossing. The choice is yours. If you cross - you pays my price. It's yours to decide."

A silence, broken only by the random splashing of water, envelopes the bridge. The gunman's smell reaches Laverick's nose.

"We gotta cross ..." begins Traherne, at first a conciliatory pleading, but then the voice decays.

"I have an evil eye, y'know," from the gunman, brightly. "Bet you can't tell which one it is?" Then, switching tack: "You go to visit Jokerman?"

Traherne nods, mouth set in a firm line.

"I saw Jokerman, once ... years ago, mind.

I was staying with a tribe over yonder," indicates lazily with the gun. "Fuggin crazy it was. We was camped in the bottom of a roomy well, richly vegetated, lottsa living space, y'know. Up one sloping wall was several tiers of wide steps leading up to a point higher'n a tall man, then it's continued by steel rungs set into the usual vertical wall leading way upwards to a manhole and the outside. Jokerman arrives inconspicuously. No-one takes no notice of him. It's round midday. He walks up the tiers of steps, clear to the top. A few people watch, mildly curious. Then he turns to face the centre of the well ... then falls, as if deliberate, all - the - way - down." The gunman shakes his head as if to clear it. "Then the next day, exactly the same time, he goes up them steps again to the top. People watch with a little more interest. Again he falls, all - the - way - down. Third day a small group gathers, and he repeats the performance. Yet the rest of the time he's sat by hisself. Talks to no-one, though by this time THEY's all talking about HIM. On the fourth day the entire tribe turns out. Exactly same time he climbs them steps, one - at - a - time, like in a ritual. Right to the top. Then turns to face the crowd. Every eye on him now. And he ... JUST WALKS DOWN AGAIN! No expression. No nowt. The crowd goes wild. They eat outta his hand after that."

Vinnicombe smirks unpleasantly. "Every sewer rat has tales something like that."

"Yet you wanna see him? - first you gotta cross my bridge!"

"We won't pay!" yells Laverick, kicking the nearest mule. It shies back. He grabs the cord reins, pulling until the perspiration stands out on his forehead and his arms ache. Yet the mule remains unmoved. "Half's too much. We offer a quarter."

"A quarter's one fourth. It's a small segment. But it ain't a half."

"You're a robber," shouts Vinnicombe angrily. "We should throw you offa this bridge."

"You're welcome to try. I look forward to ventilating sewer vermin with this ..." patting his gun affectionately. "But then, it's not done to hasten business. We can fight on your return."

"We won't return this way. Our destinies lie in the future, yours in the past."

Laverick watches the developing tension with heightening amusement.

"Nevertheless, we'll meet again, sometime. When we do we'll test our skills."

Unexpectedly Vinnicombe smiles. "It shall be so."

They unload half the possessions from the panniers. The man carries his spoils away, then returns. They watch as he produces two blindfolds, securing them over the beast's eyes. Muttering softly to the animals all the while he turns them round three times right, then to the left. Then leads them unprotestingly over the rope-section of the bridge. On the far side he removes the blindfolds.

"What they can't see don't fear them none," grins the gunman, showing a wide expanse of cracked and dirty teeth. Then he's scuttling away into the forest of weed.

The party reassembles to move off along the wide inspection ledge towards a further complex of sewers, Laverick wondering at the ritual of aggression he's just seen enacted. The accepted inevitability of conflict, a reality not feared, not even anticipated, just accepted, if possible delayed.

Time's died in the sewer world.

Then Traherne's speaking at him. "Laverick, if the ordinary person's given the choice of good or evil, what'd be the choice?"

"Don't know! It's a meaningless question. What do you mean 'ordinary person'? There's no ordinary. And a choice between what - good and evil? Values are flexible. There's no absolutes.'

"So?"

"A person brought up in a harmonious synergic society would make an unselfish, beneficial choice. A person brought up in a society of aggression and self-interest would make a self-centred decision. Kropotkin's 'Mutual Aid' or Wordsworth's 'nature red in tooth and claw'. Beyond such generalisations there can be no absolutes."

"They'd choose evil!"

"Jokerman and his twin grew into - or were forced into, a very close relationship," continues Traherne. "Their father, angered by his daughter/mate's refusal to continue his sex-game programme, was prone to outbursts of violence. He wanted to continue incestuously breeding with the daughters of his daughters in an attempt to eliminate all 'alien' genes and eventually create an exact female facsimile of himself. Barred from this aim he vented his frustration on his sons who he blamed for breaking the chain, subjecting them to both sexual abuse and mutilation. Eventually, in one such obscene rage, he killed the idiot brother. The grieving boy awaited his opportunity, then attacked and butchered the father in a

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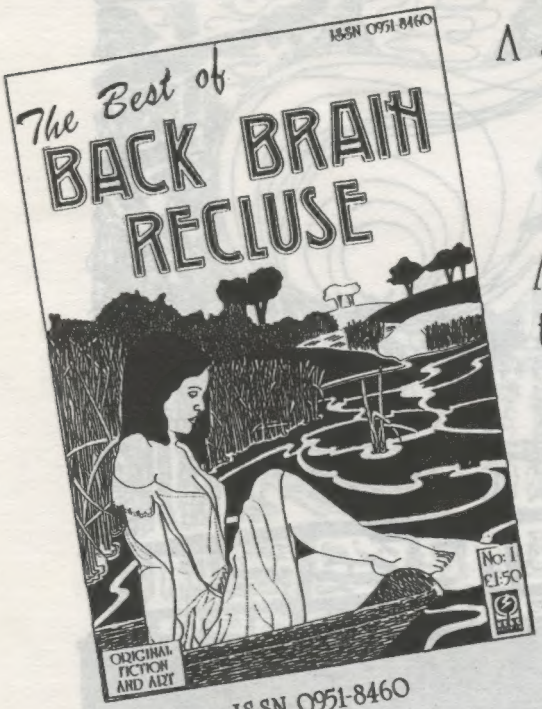

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particularly gruesome manner. Forced to leave the group before its people learned of the deaths, he fled, living for ten years by his own devices in the wasteland of tunnels and grottos, eating all manner of natural and unnatural drugs. It's said that, on his brother's death, he acquired the dead youth's talents, and can be thrown into raptures of meditative ecstacy for days on end, requiring no food or water, showing no sign of life beyond shallow breathing. He's also able to transmute his personality to others - so they say. Once even 'trading' his being with a whore living in some foreign port, entering her psyche, becoming her for a number of months, learning the sensations of copulation, anal, oral, and vaginal, as experienced by both sexes. The ability of orgasm to release the conscious mind to higher states of awareness. He learned foreign wisdoms, alien experiences. Some claim he's since occupied several bodies in succession. That he's even been killed, three, maybe four times, yet remains alive. His reputation as a travelling mystic grew. It preceded him as he walked throughout the sewer-world. Tales grow spontaneously about his abilities ..."

> "In an average sewage there are in every 100,000 parts about 100 parts of solid matter, including residue after evaporation. Of these 100 parts about 30 parts will be in mechanical suspension, and about 70 parts in solution or colloidal suspension. Of the 30 parts in mechanical suspension about 10 parts will be mineral and 20 parts organic. Of the 70 parts in solution about 45 parts will be mineral and 25 parts organic. As a general rule, the mineral parts are harmless, and only give rise to mechanical difficulties in the process of purification. The 45 parts of organic matter, or roughly 1/2,000 of the whole, are these which can cause trouble"
>
> "SMALL SEWAGE WORKS"
> Frederick Charles Temple
> C.I.E., C.B.E., V.D.
> (The Technical Press Ltd. 1955)

Imagine, all over London, Paris, New York, Munich, every major city in the Western Block, people quietly rolling joints in illegal indulgence - when there's a knock on the door. Police? Narcotics Squad? Flush the contraband down the toilet ... where it swirls into the immense sub-metropolitan complex of sewers. Drifting seeds and spores pregnant with hallucination lodging into accumulations of silt and slime, sending up snaking white tendrils, never seeing the sun. Thriving into limpid white forests of mutated marijuana through which trek tribes of outlawed and unsuspected people spawning lost troglodyte generations through the eccentric forgotten and overgrown catacombs.

Laverick kneels for a moment in the brief silence washing the sheltered arch, the glow of a fire illuminating the circle of crouching forms. He watches as Fren exhausts her cigarette, imagining the contours of her body beneath the shapeless robe, the warmth of her breasts, the tactile smoothness of her skin. But she's deliberately ignoring his interest and begins modifying a whistle from a hollow piece of wood she's discovered. Her patience infinite and aimless - but deliberately excluding him, her hair drifting in glistening strands to privately tent her doe-eyed face. Every now and then she blows into the mouth-piece to test the tone, her head weaving to unseen rhythms, sampling the noise like an aural connoisseur as it echoes, trapped in the arch. Then she sets about carefully modulating the instrument to correct some half-imagined defect of tonal purity. The occasional bleak notes seem oddly blasphemous in the otherwise absolute stillness. The fire crackles sympathetically sending a small cascade of sparks like cosmic dancers upwards in sequined columns.

"What's Jokerman's 'message' then?" Laverick's motives more to dispel the embarrassing emptiness than a genuine desire for information. "A clarification of life-force?"

"In a way," says Traherne enigmatically.

"Truth can't be explained - it's got to be experienced." Vinnicombe seems pleased with the finality of the statement.

"He thinks the ultimate aim of life-force is nullity," says Traherne softly. "The extinction of the senses. The slow immersion of the aesthetic, the vital, into the material, the inert. In Phase One of everything there was a clear division between dead rocks and stuff, and the life-force itself, which was, like, spirit - apart. But by gradual degrees, over cycles of geological history the life-force bound

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

SEXSCORE GAMES

Give the average lady a pleasure press button & she'll orgasm herself to death. Birth, sex & death being sides of the same trinity coin. Orgone triangle. It is now known that the organism can only tolerate relatively low thresholds of acute sensation. Post-revolution DNA being reprogrammed to greater sensitivity, as a symbolic protest against former supposed male supremacy. Death process idealised as ultimate pleasure-pain experience.

Many population limitation sports flowered intermittently in the first post-uprising years. Soon to wither & die as fads & trends rapidly changed. Sexscore has survived & flourished among myriad shortlived fashions. It still enjoys the greatest spectator support. Furthermore all contemporary projections and forecasts indicate continued durability.

Psycho-sexual snuff games developed slowly. Some took decades to mature. Single-sex reproduction initially produced rapid numerical growth. Inhibiting this feminist insurrection from developing & improving on its initial gains. People soon exceeding available space & food. War, plague & famine no longer functioning as viable population controls.

RICH SENSUAL LAYERS UNFOLD

Sexscore is cable broadcast on international TV networks. It began as a routine population control of surplus breeding stock. Now it's all the rage.

Blackburn, Lancashire, Planet Earth. 500 teenage women gyrate on deep green grass turf. Cameras pan onto Ewood Park stadium. Ancient football terraces now packed with human female animals of all ages, shapes & sizes.

Floodlights are suddenly switched full on & rotated. Fast moving brightly coloured lights. A mosaic of electric rainbows caress naked flesh.

Rival fans chant intensely hypnotic mantras. Naked sexscore stars pair & grind like dervishes.

250 a side. This match is simply black against white. Negroid & Caucasian. Beyond race differentials. Contrasting skins for TV audience identification. Saves on non-reflective bodypaint. Blacks the visiting team in this European Cup quarter final second leg. All liberated French colonial bred. Whites a local side. Lancashire mill girl stock.

Match officials walk slowly onto the field. A Chinese/Japanese cross referee. Dainty with sparse body hair, tiny breasts & a pert lemon coloured ass. Two squat Mongolian lineswomen. All three project authority & dignity.

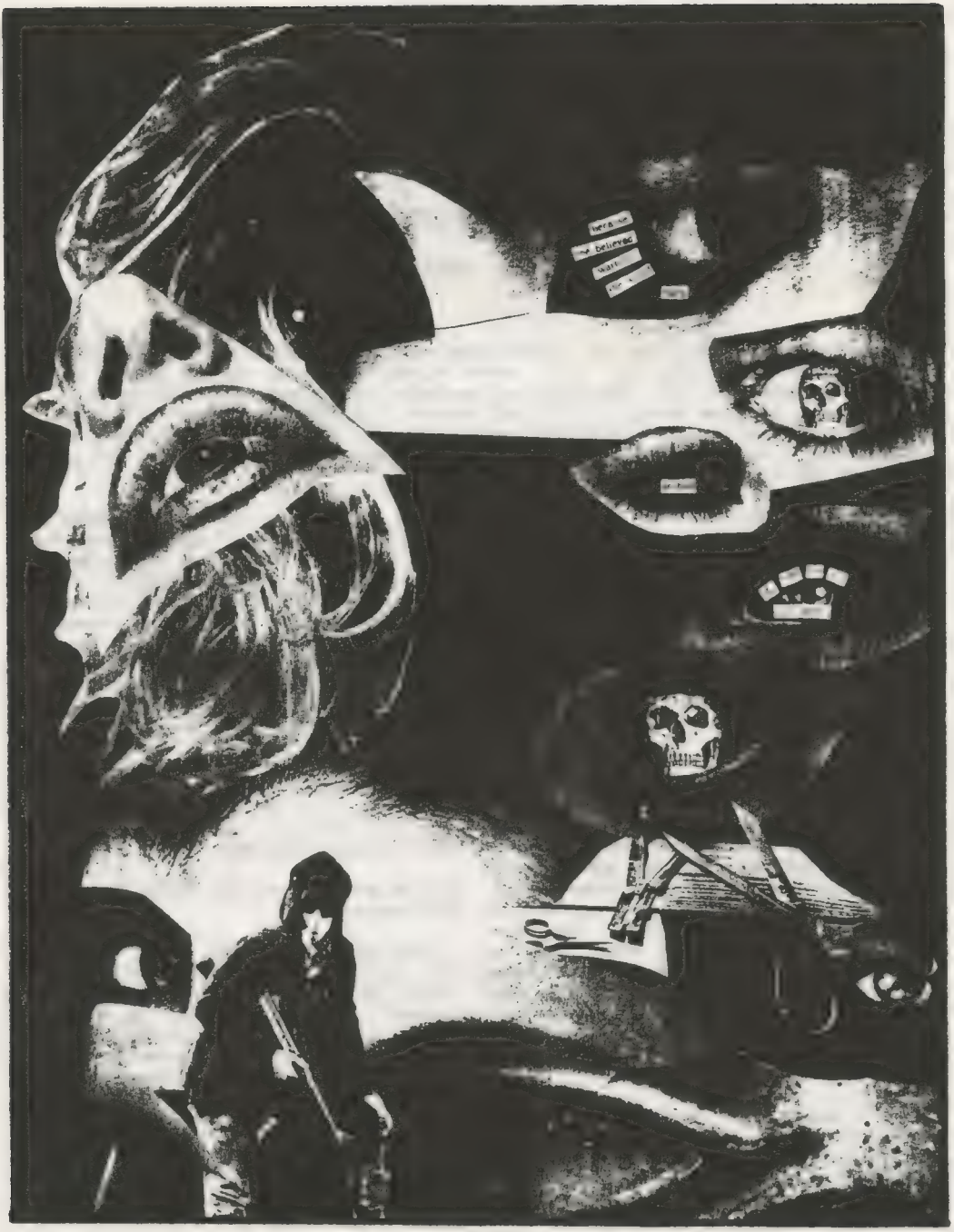
Floodlights full on. Rhythmic feminist chants. Visiting fans safely caged in Darwen end. Security troops facing them. Machine guns dangling tautly from webbed belts strapped around tight fitting jump suits. Gold leather jump suits. Black metal studded.

Seagulls swoop & glide over tense combatants. An aromatic mist drifts upward from warrior skin. A savoury soup of body heat, sweat & sharp genital juices.

Sexscore supporters begin to show their tribal loyalties. Troops flex golden leather studded arms in anticipation. Carnage is only permitted between teams on the park. Fans are carefully segregated & policed. In all ways at all times.

From Captain Jill, a work in progress.

DAVE CUNLIFFE



BOB SHAW

The Ragged Astronaut talks to Steve Bowkett and Chris Reed

Award-winning novelist Bob Shaw was special guest at the Third National Convention of Poets and Small Presses in Corby last April, where he was to run an all-day science fiction workshop. Unfortunately both delegates and visitors alike seemed too intimidated by the non-stop poetry readings going on in the hall to dare chat and circulate around the stalls, let alone engage in lively discussion of their work with one of Britain's leading science fiction writers. We migrated to the bar, where the atmosphere was more relaxed, and kept an eye out for Bob's first customer ...

You've been running a workshop all day ...

Yes, it's very exhausting work!

What sort of things were you hoping to do with this workshop, what had you got planned?

All I had hoped was that some people who were keen to write and sell science fiction would benefit from my experience.

So you would be looking at just the general technique of writing, suggesting things to them.

Yes. There is a lot of technique in science fiction, possibly more than any other branch of literature, and it's a technique which generally has to be consciously applied. I don't think science fiction's a thing you can do instinctively very well. After a while you do get to know what you're doing and so you do it consciously, and you can quite often explain it to somebody else who just hasn't cottoned on to certain points.

You need a feel for it ...

Yes, you need a feel for it and need the experience. I find it's a bit like learning to drive a car. When I first started driving I was so busy manipulating all the controls and everything I couldn't see where I was going, and once I turned into somebody's drive because I'd been told to turn left, and I find it's like that with writing a short story in particular. At first I was so busy trying to be a writer and remembering everything that the stories never turned out the way I expected. Then after a few years the story which emerged started becoming closer and closer to the idea that I had in mind when I started, and today the story comes out just about what I expected.

So you learned the tools of the trade and now you're using those tools to produce the craft.

Yes, very much like that.

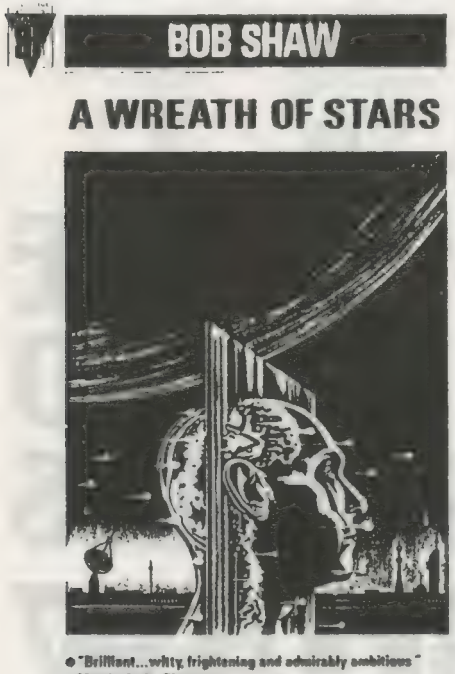
What do you find are the things that people fall down on most?

I teach writing at night school sometimes, I've done a lot of odd little workshops and things, and one of the things I find when I discuss a person's failure is that they don't put enough time into plots. In mainstream literature, especially in okay literary magazines, plotting is scorned. The establishment writers look down on it. I think the general feeling is if you're a real writer your command of the language and your insight into human nature and the skill of writing is so great that plot is superfluous and you shouldn't need it, but

the fact is that the ordinary reader likes plots and editors like plots, and I find that a good one actually helps me to write. When writing a story in which I believed the plot was a bit thin in places, something not quite right, I'd tell myself that when I get to that bit I'll make up for it by the sheer brilliance of the writing and cover it up. But you should never do that, because you should be writing your best all the way through. So the thing is to get the plot right, and it inspires you to know you've got a good plot. You get this charge when you start to write a story because you know it's going to be a success before you've started to write.

How much preparatory work do you do in making notes and structuring the book before you settle down to do your thousand finished words a day?

With the last book The Ragged Astronauts I wrote a fifteen page synopsis and then I must have done another fifteen pages of notes and diagrams of the planetary system



and sketches of imaginary places. I do that sometimes because in science fiction you're writing about something which doesn't exist and never will exist. To make it realistic I often sketch a situation or a scene and then project myself into it and write about it. But, particularly when you're teaching writing, it's very often short stories you're talking about.

Completely different from novels though, isn't it?

Well, yes to a large extent, and even there people don't plot enough. They get an idea or sort of idea and then they rush away and write the idea, you know, they treat it as a plot and they end up with four or five pages at the most ... My most famous short story 'Light of Other Days' has now been anthologised more than thirty times. I got the idea one day in the proverbial flash and I started thinking up a plot to carry the idea. The way I think of a plot is if you imagine an idea is like a diamond, a plot should be a machine which holds that diamond up to the light and turns it around so you can see every facet and brings the best out of it. So I carried the idea of 'Light of Other Days' around for two years and during that time I thought up plot after plot, at least a dozen I think, any one of which would have sold because the idea was good, but none of them was the plot which I wanted. When the plot finally came I wrote the story in two evenings, so you could say I got a lot of money for two evenings' work, but it wasn't two evenings' work - it was a year's work on and off.

In several books you start off with an invention, such as slow glass in Other Days, Other Eyes, the magniluct glass in A Wreath of Stars, and the neutron resonator in The Peace Machine, and then follow the consequences of that invention. So the invention would be the idea, and the consequences the plot?

Yes, that would be about it. I write different kinds of novel, but one kind I do like to write is a science fiction novel which is set perhaps only a few years in the future, almost in the present. I change one thing, make one technological development, and then try to write a straight novel about how it affects a few people's lives.

I would put The Peace Machine in that category ...

Yes, it's in that category.

... because you were practically just writing a political thriller, and but for the initial invention it wouldn't have been science fiction.

No, it wouldn't have been. In fact my hardback publisher turned it down, because, he said "My contract was for Bob Shaw's next science fiction novel, and this book can in no way be described as science fiction and therefore I'm not taking it, but it doesn't affect our option on his next science fiction novel", so they got me both ways! But eventually they did publish it, because it was science fiction - it was fiction for a start, and it concerned a scientific device which doesn't exist. To me it was pure science fiction, but I made it deliberately read like a novel. Actually I would like to write an ordinary novel. In many ways it must be so easy compared to writing science fiction, because if I could write a novel set in present day Warrington where I live, every sentence I wrote of description would call up in the reader's mind a million previous words he had read and he would know what I was talking about. The work's done for you. In science fiction you've got to fill in the background as well as the characters and the story, and I find that very very hard work, really hard work.

Does starting off with an invention, a scientific development, reflect your engineering background?

No, not really, the idea always comes out of the unconscious. All my ideas aren't like that. I've published now twenty-four books and you've only listed three or four, and some of the others are very different in construction. When an idea comes through the subconscious, 'boink', I then bring in lives and background to make it seem realistic, if I can. I know the way engineers talk. Well, I know the way they used to talk. When I started off in engineering you could always recognise a draughtsman because he had a six-inch slide rule sticking out of his breast pocket. Those days have long past, but I know roughly the way engineers talk and so that can give the wildest science fiction idea a gloss of authenticity. That's one of the techniques in science fiction - you play down the impossibilities in your story and you play up the probabilities, and

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THE RAGGED ASTRONAUTS

BOB SHAW

hope that the reader won't catch on.

The Peace Machine struck me as taking a rather pessimistic view of the arms race, and the fact that there's not a lot Joe Bloggs as an individual can do about combatting the political machine in that respect.

Normally I'm not a pessimistic writer - I've written very very few stories with downbeat endings. I've stopped worrying about the bomb, because you can't keep on worrying forever. You've got to get on with your life, but in those days it was hanging heavily on my mind.

You revised it two years ago ...

I had to because the year the story was originally set in had passed, and I just wanted to bring it up to date. I cut out a few purple passages and I cut out one entire chapter. When I first wrote the story the concept of a nuclear winter wasn't with us and I had a scene where some atom bombs were actually exploded. I hadn't realised the amount of damage they would cause, and so I cut that out in the second version.

Are there themes that you like to explore, apart from the consequences of one change in society?

One thing I keep coming back to though I try to disguise it each time is the survival of the personality after death. I think this interests me because I'm an atheist and I don't expect to survive after death, but I like to think up non-religious, non-mystical means of surviving after death, science fictional means, and then do stories about them. I've done that in several books and quite a few short stories. It's easier for another person to spot your trends and your thinking and your themes ...

I just wondered if you consciously kept going back to a particular theme because you enjoyed it so much.

I do my best to make every book different, I don't think I've repeated myself really yet, I'm hoping that I never will. That's one of the reasons I'm very much behind with my current book, the sequel to The Ragged Astronauts. When I was writing it I kept saying "I've done all this before, this isn't new to anybody", and then I was saying to myself again "It isn't meant to be totally new - it's meant to be a sequel". A reader would find it a bit strange if a sequel didn't have any elements of the first book in it.

Do you find it hard to write a sequel? It seems to me that other writers find it hard to keep the momentum going.

Yes, you're bound to run out of steam, because a writer writes for himself as well as for the reader. When I'm starting a book I don't know how some bits in it are going to turn out, and I'm interested to find out how they're going to turn out. I always start off with an outline, but a book never completely sticks to an outline. The idea develops as you're writing, the characters develop and you can suddenly get an insight that can change it all and that's very exciting. You've got to have something for yourself in the book. I always do a synopsis, for commercial reasons, because I've never written a book and then tried to sell it. I've always sold in advance, so I've got to have a synopsis there to build a contract around. It's important for me to make that synopsis as convincing as possible, and sell the book to the publisher, but yet there's always something I don't put in it. There's got to be something that nobody will see until the book's finished. A bit like the way many artists don't like anybody to see a painting until it's finished.

Do you find it puts the pressure on a great deal if you've already been paid for the book in advance, and then you've got to come up with the goods?

Yes, that's one of the things I like. When I get that advance I promptly spend it and then I've got three possibilities open to me: to give the money back, which is impossible; go to gaol, which I don't want to do; or write the book. So I write the book.

So it's a positive pressure on you.

Yes, I'm one of those people who need it.

How did you get started in writing, how did you manage to get that first advance, what was the big breakthrough?

I'd sold quite a few short stories before and I'd established myself in the field as a short story writer. In 1967 when I was doing

my first book there was quite a boom going on in science fiction. A lot of magazines were coming out and a lot of books were being published, so it was easy enough. I feel sorry for somebody who's trying to break in today. For me it was easy - I just walked in.

How do you see the standard of science fiction today?

I couldn't answer that question because to me science fiction doesn't have a single standard. It isn't homogenous. You can define a western story very easily or a historical story. They're all going to be pretty much of a likeness, much the same thing, but a science fiction story can be anything at all, and it offers different things to different people. Some of what it offers is good and some of what it offers to people is rotten.

Let's take it from another direction. The so-called 'space opera' has gone out of fashion and we're looking at the so-called 'cyberpunk' trend. How do you see that?

I couldn't write that stuff to save my life, and actually I find it very difficult to read - I just can't get into the story. So I'm trusting that old fashioned story-telling and characterisation, with an original science fiction idea, will continue to sell books for me.

Is there an idea that you've ever had that's so good you've never felt quite up to producing the story that would go with it? Is there a story in you that you would like to write but have not yet approached for that reason?

There's one I'm thinking about, and I'm nervous about it. I'm nervous about every book, which may be why I sell! I think it's when you believe you can do it without effort that your work drops. I always think I can't do it, and this time I'm going to be found out. But I've got one idea which is very difficult and I don't know if I'm up to it, but I keep thinking about it and coming back to it. It's an idea of portraying aliens in an alien way. We've had lots of stories with alien beings in, and normally a writer shows that an alien is an alien by making him very strange looking, breathing methane and all that. But usually you find that inside it's still a human being and you can tell by the emotions. There's exactly the same set of emotions - pride, fear, anger, ambition, you know ... It's just the same as us, so that the alien isn't an alien.

A short story by Stanley G. Weinbaum [1900-35], a pretty old writer of the 30s sticks in my mind [sounds like 'The Lotus Eaters' (1935)]. This chap landed - I think it was meant to be on Mars - and there were intelligent vegetables there. He was talking to one of them, to this thing that looked a bit like a cabbage, having a highly philosophical conversation, and while he was doing it this animal came up and started to eat the cabbage. The cabbage still kept on with the conversation, even though it was being devoured, and didn't care because it didn't have that emotion of fear and wanting to survive. And that really stuck with me. I'd love to write a novel in which there were aliens with emotions that we don't know names for, so I'd have to invent names for the emotions and I'd have to invent what caused them.

I might have it for instance that these aliens have four sexes. Four individuals of each sex have to come together to procreate, and therefore if three of them are in a room together and a fourth one comes in - even if the fourth one isn't the right sex to make up a group for procreation, maybe they're not even thinking about it - the very fact that they're now numbered four causes an emotion, and I would have to give that emotion a name. If I did the book right the reader would get to know these things and he could see the alien going into a situation, and he'll think, "Of course if he goes in there he's going to experience 'gloink'", I want him to know it, and then the alien goes in and he <u>does</u> experience it.

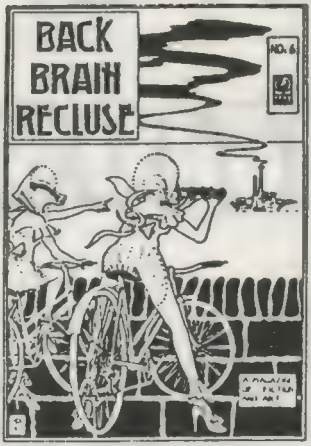
That's hard. It's like trying to describe a new colour or something that's beyond everybody's experience.

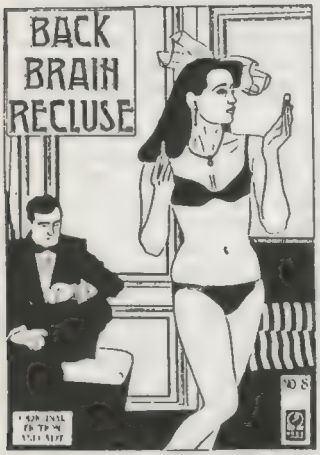
Yes, it'd be hard. And then I would have to get plot, a good story, because I can't write a book that hasn't got a story, so it would have to be good ... That's one I've been walking around circumspectly for the last four or five years and just trying to psyche myself up to it.

When you sit down and decide right you're going to write the next novel, having done the synopsis and whatever, when you've got that first sheet of paper in the typewriter,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

BACK ISSUES





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See page 6 for Overseas Prices.

The Art of ATTENTION

Don Webb

Hermes Psychopompus in day-glo orange. Graffiti is getting odder and odder. Reiser could remember when personal ads were in vogue: Chico 23, Blacksnake 555, and Last Gasp 93. He's commuted for eight years now and never seen a spray can. He had taken Eileen to the theatre at night, even gone to see midnight foreign films at the Apollo. But never seen anyone actually paint the colourful screaming scrawls.

Reiser had begun collecting graffiti. It's a simple, easy hobby. All an aficionado needs is a notebook, eyes, and a 29 cent Bic pen. For the more exotic enthusiast, there are publications - quarterly collections or regional compendiums. Reiser found these slick collections disappointing. They were basically bathroom humour or lists of forgettable puns from telephone booths apparently favoured by the literati. When puns are outlawed, only outlaws will have puns.

Reiser's speciality was the mysterious. Occult sigils, obscure politico-cabal propaganda, surrealist paint jobs. It was the encircled "A" which first caught his attention. From the orange sunshine days of Berkeley, his alma mater, he identified a symbol of anarchists almost as traditional to anarchy as Bakuin's black flag.

He'd made a fool of himself over that. He called the police, warning them that the I.R.T. sub had been marked for destruction. They listened with the institutional patience which has evolved in New York. In the end, they investigated Reiser rather than the bomb-carrying schemers he'd envisioned.

The incident served to remove his blinders. A vast world of communication, secret because it was so public, became available to him.

Once Reiser sought to join the nameless army of artists who haunt the City. Artists whose work he'd admired, marvelled at, but whom he'd never seen at work.

He chose midtown. A small shop with a white-painted wall about twelve feet on the square. He was cautious - he was sure those he sought to emulate were cautious - shifting as they did in his mind from Andre Breton to Hogan's Heroes. Reiser had to walk past the shop eight times between two and four ayem for the street to clear. He wanted no witnesses. Especially not the dreaded police; bluemen who could ruin his career as a travel agent.

Finally his chance arrived; the street was silent, his potential canvas well illuminated by a street light (one of the many reasons why, after months of planning, he'd chosen this site). He approached the wall, pristine white - almost virginal. To his surprise he had an erection. Slowly he drew the spray can from the sack. Metallic black. He stared at the wall in horror for three minutes, then slunk away. The wall unpainted. He realised he'd nothing to say.

Shortly thereafter he began his journal. He only consulted it behind the locked doors of his office. Only after hours. He was a conscientious employee. His great fear was that Eileen would discover it. She thought that night of the spray can he'd spent with another woman. Reiser preferred her to think so.

It was only seven in the morning when Reiser passed over the sidewalk square commemorating the thrice-great Hermes as guide of the dead. He'd be able to record it in his journal before the office opened. Good.

The entry ran as follows:

> **Seven blocks from work / Hermes Psychopompus / Greek messenger god who occasionally leads the dead to Hell / Significance: unknown / Artist: unknown: 1,236 / day-glo.**

OVERLOAD
Hermes
Psychopompus
TRASH

This followed by a blank page for further comments.

The artist listing was not humourous. Reiser often identified a style of painting or a choice of medium and site with an individual artist. Usually the artist was categorised by a number attached to the first sighting of his work. Sometimes Reiser would learn the artist's personal cognomen - usually an exotic name. The series of Our Lady of Babylon by X.overlord had been Reiser's all-time favourite.

The journal entry was safe in his desk before Ms. McMathers arrived at 8:00.

Here bright and early, aren't we, Mr. Reiser?

Yes. Carpe diem and all that.

She clicked off on high heels to her office. Reiser despised her, her high heels, her saccharine manner. Reiser long ago concluded she was stamped from a sixties sit-com template. Cheerful dragon lady for office sketch. When Bewitched and I Dream of Jeannie were cancelled, she must have squirmed off the film and into the office of Schumacher's World Tours. She was neither an underling nor a manager. She was roughly Reiser's equal in the firm, although the scales were balanced by seniority on her side and efficiency on Reiser's.

The morning was dull and grey-lined. The only bright spot was arranging a tour of Pompeii and Heraculeum for a busty blonde in satin pants. Lunch time, left for soft pretzels and mustard.

There was a crowd at the scene of this morning's entry. All standing in a circle around the graffiti. Reiser thought perhaps the multitude had learned to appreciate graffiti. He elbowed his way through the crowd, planning to stand smug at the artwork he'd discovered.

Reiser's dreams proved chimerical. Instead of admiring the morning's day-glo artist, the crowd encircled a headless body and a pool of clotting blood.

Reiser knew the body - that is to say, he knew the man to whom the body once belonged. Martin Hedeiler. Ran the corrugated-iron newsstand near Columbus Circle. Bought a Times from him every Friday.

Reiser noticed only one other thing before the vomit rose in his throat to spatter the blood-covered body. The graffiti. It no longer read Hermes Psychopompus. It now read, Hello Mr. R!

THE END

---

attraction

John's
A leg man,
Follows them right
To the top
If he can.
George
Likes a large breast,
Never mind the
Face or conversation,
He is buried in the chest.
Me
I prefer eyes,
For they can
Answer questions without lies,
But double glazing often denies.

ray jon

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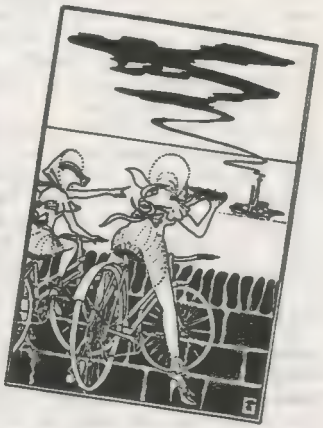

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See page 6 for Overseas Prices.

THE GRIN

Wayne Allen Sallee

Chesney first noticed the grin, as he later came to call it, while using the abdominal machine at the Nautilus on Diversey. The machine was situated between the entrance to the women's locker room and the exercise bikes. Like most of the other machines, the huge metal thing with thick orange chest pads faced a floor-to-ceiling mirror: admiring one's own sweat and contorted facial grimaces were a prerequisite for signing up at the gym.

Chesney used this particular machine often, mostly because he was trying to tone down the pot belly he had given birth to in recent months, but also because he was perfectly positioned to watch the aerobics class in progress behind him, each "Pink Cadillac" pelvic thrust or "Bang On The Drum" breast bounce reflected in the polished glass before him.

It was 6:30 of a Tuesday evening class; therefore, it was Margie leading a class of twenty in a series of jump kicks to the Clash's "Rock The Casbah". Upon completing his third set on the ab, Chesney allowed himself a ten second direct stare at the group, particularly at Margie's nubile displaced Californian body. Then staring back into the mirror, as he wiped the sweat from his forehead in a quick swipe, Chesney noticed what looked to be two paper cuts on each side of his mouth.

After showering, the twenty-seven year old copywriter examined his mouth more closely in the locker room mirror; there was no pain in his teeth or gums, nothing digging into his lips; he even used his thumbnail as dental floss to see if it would bleed.

He recollected spotting a small bump just underneath his skin on the right side of his mouth last week; had dismissed it immediately, making a mental note to avoid Pepsi for a few days. And at a party in Rogers Park this Saturday night just past, Diane Candel discreetly informed him that he had dried pus in the corners of his mouth. After that little episode, Chesney began licking his lips, a la **The Shining**'s Jack Torrance, as if his very survival hinged on his having a drink.

And now this, he grunted disgustedly into the mirror; a large man intently combing tentacles of grease across his scalp looked at Chesney and moved slightly away, as if he expected him to let out gas or something.

Impossibly, it seemed as if his mouth was **widening.**

Just then, Randy DeForio slapped Chesney's teal Calvin Kleined butt and demanded he quit hogging the sink. The copywriter dressed and desultorily walked to the el. **Christ!** he thought as he climbed the decaying steps to the elevated platform, the train rumbling in the distance. **What if it's AIDS from one of the glasses at the Orbit Room?** Hell, everyone was dying from it, seemed like. Rock Hudson, Liberace, big names in the paper; but Chicago's Uptown area had the seeds of a little epidemic here, not enough to warrant any huge headlines, but Chesney didn't want to find himself in the vanguard of the plague, thank you very much.

A week passed: the grin worsened. Chesney couldn't tell if he looked more like Burgess Meredith, with his always-maniacal sneer, or Frederic March as Mr. Hyde. Earlier, he had spoken to - more like confided in - Paul Degnan at the office about his affliction.

"Don't I look ... different than I did, say, last month," Chesney had asked him by the Hinkley & Schmitt water cooler. "No, last **week**, even."

"Well, let's see ..." Degnan said slowly, acquiring the look friends do when put on

the spot to give their honest opinion of a new tie or haircut. "Your shoulders seem broader. You been working out, Alec?"

"No!" Chesney exploded. Degnan stepped back hesitantly, and one of the temps in the secretarial pool glanced up.

"I mean, yes, I am, but no, that's not what I mean," Chesney sputtered.

"Well, then what -"

"Look at my mouth, dammit! Paul, look what's happening to my mouth! I'm not even smiling, for chrissakes!"

"So why get hyper over a few acid sores, Alec?" Paul spoke with a touch of sympathy. "Jesus, I still get them myself after I pig out on too many Nestle bars."

"No," Chesney spoke to the floor. "I've been to the dentist and even he's stumped."

Paul stood silent for a second, drinking from the Dixie cup. The typewriters nearby continued their strange language.

"Could it be hereditary?"

"I don't think so," Chesney said, the right side of his face moving in a tic that David Janssen made famous in **The Fugitive.** "At any rate, I couldn't find out. My parents have been dead for years. Shit.

"I've tried Chapstick, Campophenique ... even fucking Noxzema! Nothing helps!" Chesney jabbed the air three times for emphasis.

"Well, look on the bright side," Paul smiled. "At least you don't have AIDS, right?"

"Degnan, you can be a real jerkwad!" Chesney hissed sibilantly, spraying the air, and stormed back to his office.

Paul Degnan shrugged. "You pay a guy a compliment," he said, to no one in particular.

After accepting the fact that he had taken to drooling uncontrollably, Chesney requested a leave of absence from his job. He could no longer even clench his teeth.

During his sober moments, Chesney rationalised that he resembled The Joker, Batman's arch enemy. This thought made him laugh hysterically, only the laugh mimicked the screech of an old woman being strangled.

The television screen showed Lt. Castillo conversing in his usual zombie-like manner, explaining to Crockett and Tubbs the importance of one thing or another.

It was the first of November. Lord Samhain's night.

Chesney was passed out in his easy chair, a sea of empty Coors bottles surrounded him.

The skin around Chesney's cheeks began to pucker, then cracked the slightest bit. The grin's width increased. Wider. Wider still.

Stretching from ear-to-ear, the top half of Chesney's head bobbed slightly, giving the effect of something pushing against the roof of his mouth, Spittle ran in gushing rivulets in the gash that had been Chesney's mouth. Slowly, the skin around Chesney's upper lip curled up past his nose; the lower half of his face now looked like a dog-eared paperback. Chesney's unseeing eyes, which had popped open like a wooden dummy's early on, focused on the ceiling. His jaw rested angularly on his chest. There was little blood.

In the flickering blue of the television screen - as Joan Rivers questioned Brooke Shields as to what use her bragging about still being a virgin was when hundreds of guys could still see her naked twelve-year-old form on videocassette - a small, black, shapeless thing, the size of a grapefruit, climbed out of the hole in Chesney's dead face and dropped to the floor.

Grinning itself, the nameless black thing jumped to the windowsill, broke the glass, and quietly scurried off into the equally black night.

THE END

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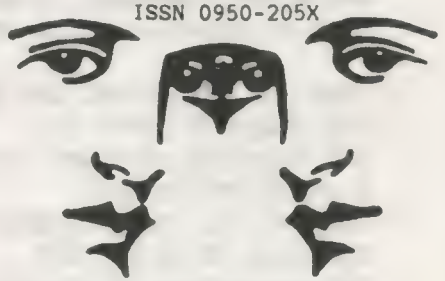

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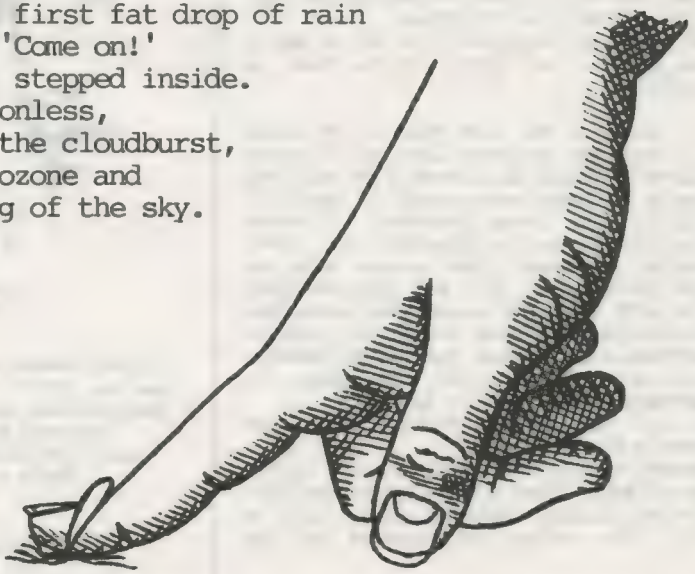
STORMBREAK

Nigel King

Heralds of the storm
The tiny invaders appeared,
As if engendered from
The static in the air,
And suddenly we were
Reluctant hosts to an unannounced
Clan-gathering of thunder-bugs.

I watched your face,
Saw your features lock into
That familiar impatient frown
As your hand became
The wrath of God,
Bringing judgement to each trespasser
With a terminal flick of the finger.

Then, at the first fat drop of rain
You snapped 'Come on!'
And turning, stepped inside.
I stood motionless,
Waiting for the cloudburst,
The tang of ozone and
The splitting of the sky.



THE YELLOW

Mark Iles

Burnham was lovely at this time of the year. The late summer's sun created soft shadows in the beach trees all around. Peter drove both skillfully and carefully, guiding the blue Mercedes sports through the country lanes with a natural ease.

He slowed down as a squirrel ventured into the road after a small tid-bit, watching it pause and sit on its haunches to stare at him before suddenly racing away.

Peter would be home soon, for the first time in many years. At last he swung into the drive that led up to River House, a proud old building of the Elizabethan period. Gordon, his guardian, was always so meticulous about its appearance, but now the house was nothing but a shadow of its former self: a few of the windows were broken and the thatch was in dire need of repair.

The car stopped with a crunch of gravel. The first thing that struck Peter when he got out was the silence. Gone was the clamour of chickens, the yapping of dogs and lowing of cows. Now there was nothing but quiet.

Peter began to wonder why Sam, whom he'd been brought up with, and Gordon hadn't come out to greet him as they always used to. Something was wrong!

Walking noisily to the oaken front door Peter lifted the brass knocker and banged loudly. The echoes sounded harsh and unreal. After a few more tries he gave up and wandered around to the back of the house, skirting the small pond and noting the absence of the once prolific ducks.

"Peter?"

He leapt back at the sound of the voice, then sighed loudly in relief.

"Christ Sam, you made me jump!"

"Sorry about that. How are you?"

They shook hands as Peter mumbled a few words and studied his childhood friend. Sam looked tired. The dark romantic eyes were red rimmed, as if he'd been crying, and they were blood-shot to boot. The black hair hung in oily tentacles about his forehead and there was a generally unkempt look about him.

"Come on inside, you must be exhausted after the journey. Please excuse the mess, things have been rather hectic lately."

Swapping small talk they entered the kitchen - into chaos!

It looked as if someone had decorated the kitchen with the contents of the yard. The floor swam with mud and pools of water. Mouldy bread, rotting vegetables and scraps of meat lay scattered throughout the room. The astonishment must have shown on Peter's face, but if it did his friend didn't mention it.

Something dreadful had happened here and he was determined to find out exactly what it was.

They walked through to the lounge, where Sam began rummaging through bottles.

"Whiskey and ginger all right?"

"Yes, fine thanks."

While the drinks were being mixed Peter looked around. In sharp contrast to the kitchen this room was remarkably smart. Atop the stone fireplace a portrait of Sam's mother gazed serenely around the room. She had been a fine woman dearly loved by all who'd known her. Peter sank happily into the depths of one of the three sofas, gratefully accepting his drink as he did so.

"There you go. I'll fix us some food in a minute," grinned Sam, shaking slightly as he returned to the bar to fix his own wet. "You must be starving. Tell me about the trip - was there much traffic?"

As Peter described the journey he began thinking rapidly. Did the absence of animals mean that Gordon was finally going broke? It seemed unlikely, there had always been vast sums of money in the family. But it was a possibility that couldn't be ignored. Finally, overcome with curiosity, he asked:

"Where's Gordon?"

At the mention of his father's name Sam's face puckered up, and with astonishment Peter realised that his friend was about to cry. He swiftly led him to a seat and said:

"Come on old fellow, what is it? What's wrong?"

Pulling himself together Sam began to relate what had happened. "A few months ago Dad started having some really weird dreams. It affected him a hell of a lot, but he wouldn't talk about it, which wasn't like him for a start - we never kept things from each other, not since Mom died. Several

times I heard him yelling and screaming in the night, it was the same dream over and over again.

"After a while he began to look really ill, but no matter what I said he just wouldn't go to the doctor's. He began working late into the night, drawing and planning. Then he began to build that blasted machine!"

"What machine?" Peter interrupted.

Gordon had always been something of an inventor, constantly working on something or another. But this was different, there was an unusual emphasis in Sam's words, a strange kind of bitterness.

The machine, when it was finished, was weird to look at, unreal, almost magical in the way it melted into the distance before one's very eyes. Laughingly Sam had referred to it as the sound machine, due to the unearthly noises it made. It was incredible, almost unreal in the way it took Gordon over. He became a different person, always working and never stopping, except when near total exhausted, and then he'd resume work after just a few hours' rest.

"This machine -" Peter interrupted, for the second time.

Sam, staring into the barren fireplace, continued as if Peter wasn't there at all. "I was mucking out the stables, a week or so ago, when Dad dragged this thing out into the yard and placed it on the workbench. He kept listening, and tuning it like some bizarre musical instrument.

"Remember my dog, Shag? He kept jumping up at Dad all the time, trying to get some attention. Instead he got clouted for the first time in his life. I saw him slinking towards me with his tail between his legs, but it was a mucky job I was doing and I didn't really want him in there with me, so I shut the door. For some moments I watched him through the window, as he went all dejected like to sit with Target, the horse that Dad gave to Sandra on her seventeenth birthday. Funny how the dog and horse got on so well. Target wasn't feeling too happy with the world either, Sandra is staying with some friends for a while."

THEY ENTERED THE KITCHEN...INTO CHAOS!

Peter stood up and walked over to refill their glasses, listening as he did so.

The look on Sam's face became one of anguish. His voice grew hoarse and eventually broke, ignoring the tears drifting down his cheeks he continued with his tale:

"I can still see Shag barking, and that's when I heard it! Such a strange sound, weird, almost evil one might say. A cross between a thousand chirping birds, swarming bees, and fingernails dragged across a chalk board. It was loud, yes, but not overly so - constantly changing in tempo, and somehow alluring ... That's when the screams began."

He gulped and brushed his tears away as Peter laid a comforting hand upon his shoulder.

"If I live to be a thousand I'll never forget those cries. Dad was a bloody mess on the ground, just screaming and screaming ... He was being torn to bits right in front of my eyes, and I couldn't do a thing about it, couldn't move ... The animals were suffering too. They were being torn limb from limb. I can still see Target's head bursting like an over-ripe melon. It was awful!"

Soon there had been nothing left, but scattered bones and tatters of flesh, which diminished rapidly, as if shredded or minced.

A sob escaped Sam and Peter held him tightly, knowing in his heart of hearts that somehow it was all true but unable to come to terms with the horror of it all. Sam's eyes, so full of pain, gazed up at him beseechingly:

"A strange golden light, that's what I remember - it was everywhere. I looked up and there was this mass of yellow, like an enormous jelly fish, throbbing and beating like a colossal heart ... So bright it hurt my eyes. I wanted to run but just couldn't move ... But then somehow I managed to crawl away, to that hidey-hole in the hay where Grandad used to stow his home made whiskey."

Sam spoke in whispers, so that Peter had to lean forward even more to catch the mumbled words.

"I prayed in there, for the first time: could never bring myself to do it before. Somebody was moving around above me. I could hear it plainly. That must've been when I passed out."

Darkness was falling when Sam awoke, and it was as quiet as a graveyard. Reassured by the consistent silence he'd ventured out and crept cat-like to the door. He paused to gaze reflectively into the pale amber of his drink.

The sky had been such a vivid blue, with a few specks of white in the distance. When he dropped his gaze his breath had been wrenched away, as if he'd been punched in the stomach. The next thing he remembered was standing next to the skeleton that had once been his father.

Blood everywhere, but not a scrap of flesh in sight. His father's skull seemed to scream up at him in silent anguish, and rebuke.

"Nothing left alive," Sam murmured. "Nothing at all!"

It was only when the sun finally set that he could bring himself to bury the few remains and hose down the yard. There was a half morbid, half lunatic smile on Sam's face as he finished his tale:

"I'm going to get my revenge on them, if it's the last thing I ever do."

Peter took that with a pinch of salt. "Why don't you go to the police?"

"And tell them what?"

Peter nodded solemnly. That was true, what could he have told them? But something had obviously to be done.

"They left the sound machine behind them," Sam whispered.

"So what? That doesn't help much does it."

"A lot more than you seem to realise. If it's summoned them once it can do it again."

Peter stared at him in disbelief. "What are you saying?"

"That's how we get our revenge. This time we'll be ready for them."

Peter choked on his scotch, spilling some of it down his expensive-looking suit. "Less of the we! If you think I'm going to help you you're out of your tiny mind!"

Sam smiled grimly and explained his strategy. They argued heatedly all afternoon, but Peter knew he owed it to them to at least try, and by tea time he'd given in.

The new pony looked out of place somehow as it strutted about the paddock. Nowhere near as majestic as Target, the Shetland still had something curiously appealing about it.

"JUST PISS OFF FOR GOD'S SAKE!"

As Peter caught hold of the timid beast he called out:

"Is everything all right?"

Sam's reply was muffled by the henhouse. "Couldn't be better." A moment later he appeared smiling all over his face, the needle dripping in his hand.

Peter felt a stab of remorse as he administered the slow acting poison to the pony. Pulling himself together he walked up to his friend and slapped him on the back. "That's it then, all done."

Together they walked around the stables to the meadow beyond the paddock, staring at the grassy dell as it dipped slightly before reaching the barbed wire fences, both rusty now, with a rain filled trench between them. Beyond the fences was a copse of beech trees and then the small country road that bordered the river, from whence the house got its name.

"You see," Sam stated blandly, "it's simple: all one has to do it start the machine and run down here, across the dip, over the fences and road. We're both strong swimmers so as long as you remain in your diving suit, with my aqua-lung ready, we'll be safe underwater. It's a shame there's not enough room in the hidey hole, but there you go."

"Hello Peter," a very feminine voice said.

Stunned the pair turned to stare at Sandra, Sam's younger sister. They'd forgotten all about her!

"So," she smiled coquettishly, "I've come back right at the right moment. It's good to see you Peter. Where's Dad? I've come to ask him if it's alright to stay at Mandy's for a few more days." She paused to look at Peter

yet again. "But the maybe it's not such a good idea after all."

Sandra's friend was wandering about the yard, stopping to feed the pony some grass and gaze at Peter's Mercedes.

"Listen, your Dad's not here at the moment. Go and stay at your friend's, I'm sure he won't mind."

"Why, don't you want me here?"

Peter suddenly snapped. "Just piss off, for God's sake!"

She fled in tears, closely followed by Sam, who tried vainly to come up with some explanation. Peter already regretted what he'd said. All his life he'd loved her, it was one of the reasons he'd come back. But things had changed so much lately. He watched Sam hold the sobbing teenager and suddenly frowned. Something was wrong, what was it?

And what was that strange, eerie noise?

He caught sight of Mandy fiddling with something on the workbench and suddenly the yellow light around him made sense. He looked up at the sky, and his face drained. The heavens were filled with a brilliant gold, so bright that it hurt his eyes.

Then the animals began to scream, and he realised with horror that it wasn't just the animals. Mandy seemed to ooze or melt into a fine mist, while Sandra and her elder brother exploded into a shower of blood, spraying the side of the stables with gore.

Knowing that he was already too late Peter turned and ran for his life. Sobbing he leapt the first fence, fell headfirst into the trench and began climbing the second lot of barbed wire, grabbing at it with bare hands and feeling the cruel spikes bite and rip into his skin.

He swung precariously atop the fence, then plunged into a mud pile at the bottom. Wiping the slime from his eyes he gasped with relief - almost there, almost safe now. Then he looked up, only to see the yellow waiting for him.

Much later, when darkness fell and the full moon climbed wearily over the tree-tops, a small boy crept into the yard. Such a small boy really, whose nights were plagued by vivid nightmares, and a strange calling ...

Carefully he picked up the sound machine and returned to the shadowy woods. The boy smiled when he placed it in the science department of a small county school, where it lies now, surrounded by laughing and inquisitive children.

THE END

BOB SHAW

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

what goes through your mind, how do you feel?

It doesn't start off with the first sheet of paper in the typewriter, it starts off with the inspiration. My last book, the one I got the award Best Novel of the Year for, The Ragged Astronauts, started off as a situation. I was reading a book on astronomy and I needed an idea for a story, and was glancing through this article on the solar system and I noticed the very strange relationship that Pluto has with its single moon. Surface to surface they're only ten thousand miles apart - less than from here to Australia - and the moon is fixed, always above the same spot on Pluto. It would be up there, just hanging above you all the time. Of course it's dark out there so you wouldn't really see it, but I thought it an interesting situation. If there was another planet ten thousand miles, or even less, just hanging above you all the time, you'd be able to see the continents on it, and the oceans. So that was the germ of the book.

Then I had to build in a plot, and that took a day or two. In a story like that you more or less have to have a journey from one of the worlds to the other, and to make the story worth reading, to make it plottable, the journey had to be achieved by people whose science wasn't quite up to it, to make it an epic journey. It's be no good if it was something you could do in ten minutes. Once I'd worked out the idea of the epic journey then it was a matter of filling in all the circumstances and inventing the history of the civilisation. But the essential step was noticing that thing about Pluto. The funny thing was I'd seen those facts many times before, because I'm interested in astronomy, but it never did anything to me before because I wasn't looking for an idea. I find that's the way the subconscious seems to work. When you're in the market for an idea, the conscious brain puts a requisition in to the subconscious, puts in an order, and after a few days something goes 'ding' and the idea comes popping up into the conscious.

Obviously you get very excited when a new idea falls beautifully into your mind like that. Does your excitement carry on through the writing of the book or does it become

very much like a chore?

Usually when I start to write the book I'm always very pleased with it and then I get fed up. After you've been thinking about a thing day in day out for three months you begin to think it's the most boring, stupid, trivial ... But you've got to trust your original instincts and go on. As I said earlier, there's always that bit which I haven't put in the synopsis, which is going to be a surprise even to the publisher, and thinking about that keeps me going as well. Then of course once you get near the end of the book and you think "It's coming, it's happening!" that gives you a lift, but the middle passage I find very hard work indeed.

Do you ever give up?

No, no, you mustn't ever. One of the things I impress on my students when talking about writing is: never start anything unless you know you're going to finish it. It's very important, because nobody ever got any money for an unfinished manuscript, and also it's bad discipline. If you know that you've got to finish it it makes you very very careful about what you start, and you should be careful about what you start. If you want just a scribbling practice it's all right to write fragments, but going in for it seriously you've got to finish every time because finishing is very often the hardest part. The more you do it the better you get at it. To write ten stories and finish them gives you far more experience than writing a hundred half-stories and not finishing them.

There's more achievement in it to actually finish something ...

Yes, there's achievement, but there's also the expertise. You've got to learn how to do it. You've got to learn how to force the thing through and finish it.

So you don't write ever just to see how something will appear on paper and then let it simmer?

No, no, I've sold every word I've ever written. I haven't got a single sheet of old manuscript anywhere on my desk. Sometimes editors ring up and say "Have you not got an odd short story out of your reject pile?" - and I haven't.

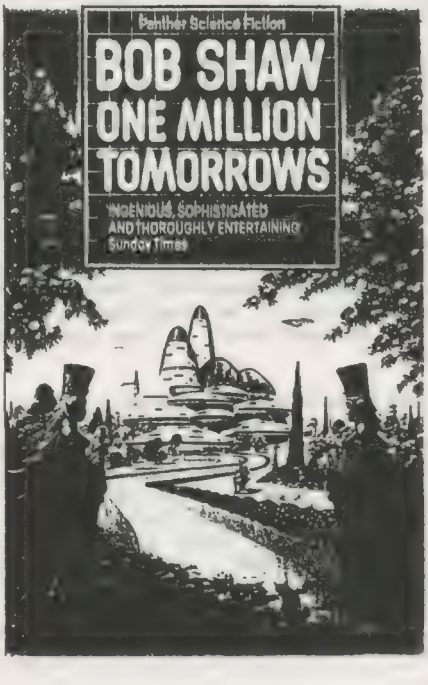
That's incredible!

But that's not through the brilliance of the writing or anything like that - it's through the straightforward business-like approach. When I was writing a short story I knew which magazine it was going to be in because I'd made it my business to read that magazine. Not only did I know what the editor was buying but I knew what he was getting fed up with. I knew what he was going to be buying next year and I was producing it for him. I never failed. I sold every story.

So the advice to any budding writers is do the homework first.

Yes, it's like any business. Say you want to start making, er, wall heaters ... If you don't find out what the public wants, what sort of wall heater they like, and just make any old one you'll be out of business in no time. You've got to produce what's in demand.

So do you think it's a bit of a chestnut when writers say that they write books that they themselves would like to read? Tolkien has said this and C.S. Lewis, and they say "Nothing existed, there wasn't the sort of book around that I wanted to read so I wrote



it". Do you think that's a little pretentious perhaps?

Not necessarily, but I was emphasising the commercial approach there. At the same time as paying attention to what the market wants, I also try to make the book what I want. I've often said that I'd like to write the sort of books that I would read if somebody else had written them. The two things aren't necessarily incompatible, being commercial and also being an honest writer.

Have you ever felt that you've been too commercial?

No, because I do it for a living! As I say, I combine the things. A lot of my stories, although they're commercial and written to sell, also contain the very best writing that I can do. I'm not just being a money grabber. I'm doing it with the realisation that I have to get the money, but also with the realisation that I have to write as well as I possibly can, otherwise I won't be able to continue selling. It's not incompatible. You can do both at once.

Is there anything you look back over the years and think "Well I really could have handled that better"?

Oh yes, I feel that often. Every book I've written has bits in it that I'd love to redo. My idea of total luxury would be to be in a position to be able to write a book, put it away in a drawer, take a month's holiday, come back and write another book and put it in a drawer and take out the first book and read it with the eye of a stranger, and retype it and keep going like that, relying on the gap to distance myself from my work. But commercial pressures have been too strong - I've always had to get it away to the publishers as soon as it was written.

How long does it take you to do a novel?

My first one ever, Night Walk, took me six weeks and I was working during the day as well, so that was six weeks' spare time. I did it in a kind of fever, because I knew it was going to be my first novel. My worst time to date has been a year, working full-time. There's a big spread.

How do you organise your working day, do you get up at a certain hour and work through to a certain hour?

I'm a morning writer, and if I can start about half seven or eight and work till two o'clock in the afternoon that's it. The rest of the day I do correspondence or research or anything else, but not creative writing.

What do you do in your spare time?

I cycle quite a bit, just for health reasons. My main hobby is making stained glass lampshades. I find that very relaxing. I did a science fiction one last year which I thought was a bit of a smasher, even if I say it myself. It was a cylindrical lamp with three robots dancing, holding hands, linked around it.

What do you see as a big problem in the world at the moment?

The politicians. I don't know which was the worst thing to happen to the human race, religion or politics. It's a toss-up between the two. You see, they go in for the big lie. Some people want to be in charge, want to tell everyone else what to do. They want power and they realise that if they jumped up and said "I want to be in charge and tell everybody else what to do" people would object, so they call it 'serving the public' or 'serving the country'. They pretend they're looking after the country but they're just doing what they want to do. In an ideal world anybody who wanted power wouldn't be allowed within a million light years of it. An ideal government would be selected by some impartial committee, people who just had the right attributes.

The whole concept of political crimes gets on my nerves, especially coming from Northern Ireland. For the life of me I don't see the justification in somebody committing a murder and then saying "Oh my motives were political" and thus get special treatment. Suppose a science fiction miracle took place overnight and suddenly all the governments of the world were made up of stamp collectors, and then somebody committed a murder and was brought up for it and he said "Ah but my motives were philatelic", and they go "Oh you're a stamp collector like us - we'll make sure you don't go to gaol". There'd be a terrible outcry. But why can politicians do it? Why can a man say "My motives were political" and get off with it?

That's one of the things that leads people to write science fiction. You get these thoughts and the science fiction medium lets

you put them into words. You can devise your own political systems, your own monetary systems, and develop them on paper, though that's not the sort of science fiction I go in for very much. Another sort I don't go in for is the alternative history stories because to me the possibilities are so endless, and I feel that where anything is possible nothing is surprising. You can take any key point in history and say "Well, what if Columbus turned back?" and keep building up on it. Another one is those alien envoy stories which I can't read any more. You get somebody from Earth plumped down on some planet and he's got to learn the customs of the natives and every time he thinks he's making progress he gets a terrible setback. This goes on for about three hundred pages and then they find out the big secret in the end. It's always something like when these people are having sex they stick it in each other's ears or something, so every time he said to somebody "Lend me your ear" he was committing a horrible social gaffe. I've tried three times to read The Left Hand of Darkness and I know it's a good book and everybody tells me it's a good book, but I can't read alien envoy stories.

Back in the hall the poets droned on, and Bob Shaw reached for his glass of whiskey. "I have never written a poem in my life!" he proudly proclaimed, and went to look for another customer.

INVISIBLE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

itself more closely to the material universe like water soaking into sand. By degrees, with its fervour for somnambulance, it inserts itself from discorporate separateness, into the physical universe. First through the slight mobility of single-celled creatures, to amoeba, then with a greater complexity of involvement, to a more complex life-carrying symbiosis. Dead rock to smart rocks. Until the dilution of its apartness will be complete, all life tied to all material, and all that exists in the universe is amnesial matter."

Laverick looks out across the eternally flowing flotsam of the sewer beyond the barrier of weed.

"Can it be doubted?" Vinnicombe seems almost apologetic.

Fren puts the whistle aside, and smooths the front of her robe sensually, smiling across at Laverick. He can see the firm outline of her nipples through the cloth. A moment ago this was the only signal he wanted. But now his body seems suddenly leaden and unwilling to respond.

A twilight city lies about them. The intestines of a slain giant through which thrusts bleak rib-bones of gaunt ferrocrete. A small group of travellers move up disused arteries of sewers towards its centre, walking uneasily through the pall of silence, through the waving fronds of white weed.

Then there's noise.

It grows from some beyond that's still out of sight. Rising as if it's eclipsing even the faint light of the distant sun, diluted down through the layers of Morlok tunnels. It's a discordant noise rising and falling with the regularity of breath.

Laverick looks questioningly at Traherne.

"Our presence ... it's, uh, noticed."

The column moves raggedly down a gradual incline, darkness ebonying walls and ceiling, shadows cast by and across the jungle of vegetation. The causeway widens, twisting in a graceful half-arc as the paen rises and falls monotonously. They're approaching the heart of the city, and the heart's not quite stopped beating. They emerge in a large badly-lit arena hemmed in by tall sentinel towers of structurally symmetrical concrete. A number of sewers empty into a central water-way, geometrically dividing the plateau into segments. Around its periphery there's a haphazard village of shanty canvas and tarpaulin partitions. The aroma thickens with gathering darkness, and is flecked with blind black moths. Volume intensifying with it. The party moves with nervous reverence to the centre. The pack-mules stomp uneasily under their loads. They wait.

> "The average amount of faecal matter has been stated to be 135 grammes per person per day at 75 p.c. moisture content. The quantity of urine has been stated as being for the average man, 1,500 grammes of water per day, containing 72 grammes per solid matter"
>
> "SEWERAGE AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL"
> L.B. Escritt (C.R. Books Ltd.)

"Many tales accredited to Jokerman can be discounted," opines Vinnicombe. He examines the talon-like nails of his right hand with exaggerated interest. "But even that leaves an inexplicable, intriguing, residue of ideas worth investigation."

"There's one for example ... happened during a plague period. He musta been ... what? 25? Something like that, and rumours of plague were then enough to spark off riots or lynchings. For a while he lived with one of the newer east-city groups. Apparently there was an influx of refugees and he sensed one of them, a grovellor, to be a disease carrier. Jokerman hit on the Pack Head and reported the danger. But the Head was no fool. He knew people used the accusation 'plague carrier' to get rid of rivals, opponents, or just people they'd taken a dislike to. A word - and the grovellor would've been ripped apart, or burnt alive. But the Head had a sense of humour. He ordered both accuser and accused to be thrown into an isolation pit together. This was done. It's said that soon afterwards the grovellor developed plague symptoms, and died agonisingly in the pit - while Jokerman, despite the claustrophobic closeness, remained uninfected. After a due time of cautionary quarantine, Jokerman was released to become the group's seer. He spent a number of years as their guest and oracle. It's during this period he drew together the shards of his life experience to formulate the ideas he's since become known for. The ideas we seek him out for; the negative, death-wish, entropy loss, the thanatos urge ..."

"But surely ..." from Laverick, "before all that dying, there's time for a little ... procreation?"

He's watching Fren. She's squatting, urinating prettily over the edge of the inspection parapet into the sewer below.

The discord clothes itself in shambling figures, shadowy people materialising from partitions beyond the darkness. Some twenty shapes detach from the twilight to ring the party. They carry improvised instruments looted from the metallic waste of surface city, automobile and machine parts twisted into percussive shapes and beaten into each other explosively. The intensity of sound now near unbearable. It pounds in endless gut-wrenching tides. The musicians encroach slowly, slavering sub-things half-starved and wide-eyed with madness. Some are naked, bodies curiously patterned with dirt, concentric circles of paint radiating from

their genitals; others wear rags that flap aimlessly about blistered and bleeding feet or emaciated arms. Many wear heavy leather belts hung with iron grilles, street gutter covers, or shapeless gear wheels torn from the intestines of dead machinery.

At a predetermined distance the shuffling circle halts, marking time. Laverick notices approvingly that some of the figures are female. The men have either pierced genitals or are castrated. Others are hermaphrodite, reflected images trembling on their bare white skin. Laverick feels his self-control stripped to raw nerve-ends.

"Whatever you do, don't KILL any of them," warns Vinnicombe unnecessarily, "it'll only make 'em mad ... and we might end up their PRISONERS!"

The cacophony stops as suddenly as it began, the circle breaking in loose undisciplined choreography. They move like the cells of a single body, into a new configuration. Forming a pointing corridor aimed at ornate construction beyond the perimeter of the concrete plateau. The sudden silence even more unnerving than the metal music, a living silence hanging damply about them. Vinnicombe moves as indicated, along a living corridor towards the indicated shanty. The others follow, Laverick bringing up the rear beaded in terror-sweat, his breath short and sour sawing at his throat, his stomach crawling. Perhaps he should never have left his group in the first place?

Vinnicombe thrusts the hanging canvas drape aside and passes beneath it. The area beyond the door illuminated by dim light-bulbs connected by a scrawl of wires to a car battery in one grimy corner. At the farthest point a second canvas flap indicates another chamber. The walls are lined with books stacked on shelves jacked up by bricks. Thick tomes culled from the archives of the invisible city, rescued from the decay of a hundred tribal communes and collated into one mass. Several books lie open on the floor as if for cross-reference, others discarded in odd piles. A small green computer VDU screen glows low on the floor. The musty smell of decay mingles with body odour, an integral part of the ceilingless room. The atmosphere disconcertingly calm after the charged air of menace beyond the shanty.

A man squats on the floor, although aged beyond the life expectancy of the sewers, he seems strangely mundane.

"You're Jokerman?" says Vinnicombe with an air of reverence.

The recipient nods, shifting his attention towards the visitors as he does so. His eyes betray something of the glaze of lunacy, gleaming from a bearded skull. Skin stretched taut and pale.

"We've come a long way to seek you out." Vinnicombe assuming spokesmanship of the group.

"I don't make no claims. I just read what I see. Why should I help you, even if I can?" The words lack invective. Statements of fact.

"How can that be?"

"I play ideas out of symbols, draw symbols from others, taking first this source, then that, as I please. But it's subjective, reflecting my experience and my interpretation only. That's my truth. To look for anything beyond that's stupid."

"But you should HELP us!"

"I can give you pictures to draw into the mix of your own experiences and memories."

"But what about the nullity of the life-force?"

"Subjective, no more. We see, and draw conclusions from what we see. That gets to be our truth. But it's different from ideas arrived at by exactly the same process done under different circumstances. Our truth isn't greater than others. Just different."

Laverick smiles. The assimilation of the whole sewer-world atmosphere seemed to indicate the inevitability of decay, until that negativity became faith. Just as easily, Jokerman was destroying that faith by pointing out its subjective base. Laverick laughs unexpectedly as something that might be relief wells up in him. A confirmation of animal reality that's suddenly, ridiculously important.

"Perhaps preoccupation with physical trivia is a deliberate repression," muses Jokerman. "Perhaps people have been shocked into this voluntary state of somnambulism, preferring its dull false wisdoms to challenge. Perhaps things positive can only be reborn here - where we face the evidence of decay and defeat most fully."

Vinnicombe's face contorts into a snarl of feral disgust, a hatred striking deep at the rituals of the subconscious. Strangely slowly, almost gracefully he moves from the group to where Jokerman stands, waiting. Fingers curve, scimitar nails arch, tearing Jokerman's face suddenly in two as though the flesh is putrefying, the bone laid open, eyeballs coming loose in their sockets, blood spurting from lacerated cheeks and punctured retina. Jokerman slumps, before he's seized by the frenzied sacrificial grasp of Vinnicombe's claws, the face dissolving, peeling open like the falling petals of a grotesque flower. Blood weeps into stains on the wall, crimsons the clothes, obscures the words in open books.

Time freezes into slow motion. Then explodes in horrifying clarity before startled, but detached, eyes.

"So ends the Jokerman cult," breathes Laverick.

"No - don't you see? This is its finest affirmation," says Traherne gently. "A disciple of death should be released from life. It's what he intended all along, didn't you realise?"

Orgasm shimmers across Vinnicombe's distorted features. His pebble-lensed spectacles dislodge into the air. For a second, as they arc, the light catches them and they burst like sunrise ...

Laverick coasts slowly up the causeway overlooking the great open wound of the sewer. He leads a pack-mule that's heavily laden, but otherwise he's alone. The shadows cast by man and animal impale the undergrowth like fingers of umbra and penumbra pointing away from the arena below. There's a faint residue of excitement irritating somewhere behind his brain. Almost the heightened perception he'd been half-promised. Yet it was over. "Decay's just another kind of birth," he decides, "with weed sprouting like spit from the lips of its corpse. Even in the wound there's the power to heal." Below him, Vinnicombe is now Jokerman. The same Jokerman whose myths and legends he'd earlier been repeating and elaborating so breathlessly. Traherne and Fren staying on to watch the next ritual assassination by the next group of pilgrims who'd continue the cycle of myth, and so on ...

Pity about Fren though - she had a nice body.

The subterranean city of effluence lies about him. He puts its logic aside, leading the mule between thickets of undergrowth along the inspection walkway. Life rising even through the corroding crust of concrete. "Perhaps people tie themselves too closely to the city. It's trapped them so well they can't live without it. Perhaps the life-force has just lost interest in THEM?"

Laverick puts thought behind him and heads north.

THE END

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MAGAZINES

Poetry

FOLIO, Tom Bingham, 82 Dresden Close, Corby, Northants NN18 9EN. #13: A5, 32pp, £1:25. An excellent poetry magazine with a very good reputation.

INKSHED, 387 Beverley Road, Hull, North Humberside HU5 1LS. #5: A5, 40pp, 50p.

KRAX, Andy Robson, 63 Dixon Lane, Leeds LS12 4RR. #23: A5, 52pp, £1/$1:50. Another bastion of the poetry small-press.

VISION, Louis Foley, 32 Gilchrist Avenue, Corby, Northants NN17 1BA. #2: A5, 32pp, 80p.

Prose

AUGURIES, Nik Morton, 235 West St., Fareham, Hants PO16 0HZ. #5: A5, 40pp, 50p + P&P. The South Hants SF magazine.

DARK DREAMS, David Cowperthwaite, 51 Hasfield Road, Norris Green, Liverpool L11 2TG. #5: A5, 36pp, 90p/$3. Macabre fiction from Derek Stanford, Simon Clark et al.

FISHEYE, Simon Ings, All Saints' House, 82 Margaret Street, London W1. #5: A5, 60pp, £1. Good short stories.

GLOBAL TAPESTRY, Dave Cunliffe, Spring Bank, Salesbury, Blackburn, Lancs BB1 9EU. #18: A5, 80pp, £1:50, 4/£5. Short stories, poems and reviews. A meaty read!

NEW PATHWAYS into science fiction & fantasy, c/o MGA Services, PO Box 863994, Plano, TX 75086-3994 USA. #7: A4, 40pp, $2:50. A highly polished magazine from Stateside with an impressive lineup of contributors - Matt Howarth, Philip K. Dick, Brian Aldiss and Don Webb to name but a few.

SECONDHAND GOODS, Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, Near Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF. #1: A4, 32pp, trade. A change of direction from IDOMO, reprinting articles from various apas that Chuck has been involved in recently.

SPACE & TIME, Gordon Linzner, 138 W. 70th Street (4B), New York 10023-4432 USA. #72: A5, 120pp, $4. A consistently enjoyable crop of highly original sf and fantasy short stories. Always worth investigating.

THE NEW PRESS, c/o Scott Martin, 87-20 166 Street, Queens, NY 11432 USA. Vol 3 #2: A4, 20pp, $2:50. My thanks to Steve Sneyd for passing this on. Another well-produced American publication, too short on volume for my liking - it was over too quick!

Visual

BRAIN CELL, Serse Luigetti, Via Ulisse Rocchi 3, 06100 Perugia, Italy. Photo-cutting and screen print collage images, some of them very striking. Send SAE for details of availability.

MAD DOG, ODDMAGS, 78 Oxford Avenue, Southampton, Hampshire SO2 0DN. #11: A4, 32pp, £1:10. At last another issue of that fave comic strip mag, this time a special Eros/Thanatos issue. Strips by Bob Moulder, Matt Howarth, SMS and Chris Brasted.

THE RUBBER FANZINE, Rudi Rubberoid, PO Box 2432, Bellingham, WA 98227-2432 USA. Vol2 #3: A4, 22pp, $1 + postage. Rubber stamp madness of a very adventurous and interesting nature. You'll be amazed what these people come up with using those rubber things on handles you thought were only used on official documents ...

Market

FACTSHEET FIVE, Mike Gunderloy, 6 Arizona Ave., Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502, USA. #23: A4, 72pp, $5. The most extensive listing and

review of magazines - over 500 in all!! - I've ever seen, plus articles, letters, books, music. BACK BRAIN RECLUSE was a recent Editor's Choice. Check it out.

FANZINE FANATIQUE, Keith & Rosemary Walker, 6 Vine Street, Greaves, Lancaster LA1 4UF. #67: A4, 5pp, trade/loc. The nearest UK equivalent to FACTSHEET FIVE, but unfortunately still having trouble with the duplicator.

SCAVENGER'S NEWSLETTER, Janet Fox, 519 Ellinwood, Osage City, KS 66523-1329. #41: A5, 12pp, 12/$16. An important and influential market magazine sporting information from both sides of the Atlantic. A firm favourite.

WRITE NOW, Dene October, 84 Colwyn Road, Northampton NN1 3PX. #3: A4, 12pp, £1:50. UK market news with advice and tips to writers, and in this issue a special feature on selling photographs.

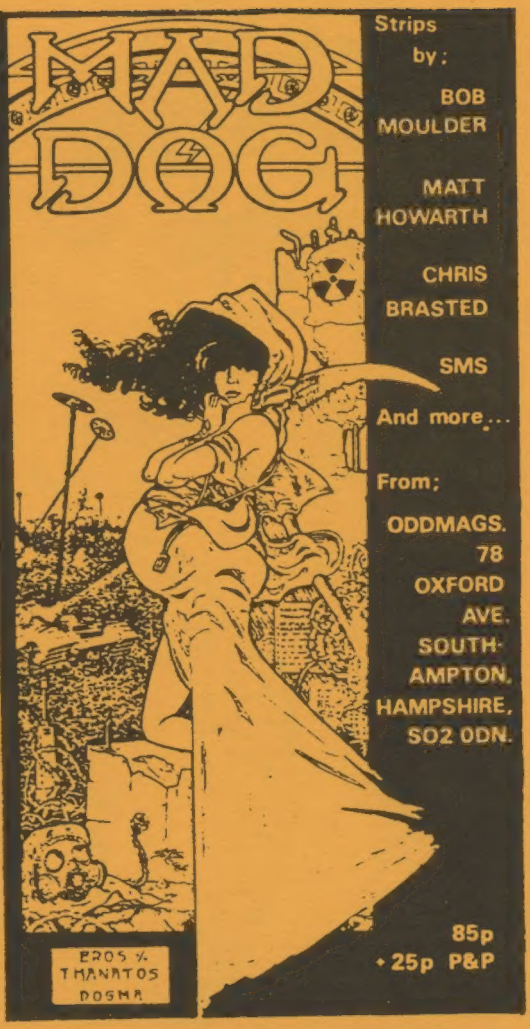
Collections

OTHER WORLDS, AND ALDERNEY by K.V. Bailey, from Blanchard Books, Blanchard, Alderney, Channel Islands.

PRIMA FACIE by Anthony Smith, from Inkshed, 387 Beverley Road, Hull, North Humberside HU5 1LS. A5, 36pp, 70p/$1:40.

Miscellaneous

SHARK TACTICS, Mike Cobley, 18 Athole Gardens, Hillhead, Glasgow G12 9BA. #3: A4, 2pp. Short but sharp newsletter format magazine with outspoken reviews and articles on sf and current affairs.



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Lucas Service

Lucas Service UK Limited
2 Pitt Street
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